

CABINET

Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday, 3rd September 2013 at Worksop Town Hall

Present: Councillor S A Greaves (Chair),
Councillors A Chambers, J Evans, J A Leigh, S May, J White and
G J Wynne.

Assistants: Councillors I J Campbell, G Jones, C Palmer and J Potts.

Advisory Members: Councillor H M Brand.

Liaison Members: Councillors B Barker, H Burton, K H Isard and C Wanless.

Officers: S Brown, A Burton, J Hamilton, M Hill, M Ladyman, E Simmonds,
N Taylor and R Theakstone.

(The Chairman welcomed all to the meeting and read out the Fire Evacuation Procedure.)

(The meeting opened at 6.30pm.)

46. QUESTION TIME - PUBLIC

Council Procedure Rules were suspended for fifteen minutes to allow questions from the public; although one member of the public was present, no questions were asked.

47. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D Challinor and M Gregory.

48. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

(a) Members

There were no declarations of interest by Members.

(b) Officers

There were no declarations of interest by officers.

49. MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS HELD ON 9TH JULY 2013

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meetings held on 9th July 2013 be approved.

50. MINUTES FOR ACTION AND IMPLEMENTATION

With regard to Minute No. 37(a), Liaison Members enquired as to the meaning of "land open to the air", as referred to in (iii), where "dogs would be required to be kept on leads when directed by an authorised officer". The Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods replied that the Order would apply to a specific area of land, for example The Canch, and that appropriate signage would be erected which would instruct dogs to be kept on leads. Consultation is currently taking

place on the proposed Dog Control Orders and a further report will be presented to Cabinet for their final approval prior to implementation.

RESOLVED that the Minutes for Action and Implementation be received.

51. OUTSTANDING MINUTES LIST

RESOLVED that the Outstanding Minutes List be received.

52. FORWARD PLAN

RESOLVED that the Forward Plan be received.

SECTION A – ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION IN PUBLIC

Key Decisions

**53. REPORT(S) OF THE CABINET MEMBER – POLICY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
– COUNCILLOR S A GREAVES**

(a) **Progressing the Council's Rural Agenda (Key Decision No. 372)**

The Council's Rural Ambassador, Councillor H M Brand, updated Members on priorities and other emerging issues, namely the draft Rural Action Plan, a copy of which was appended to the report, and the District/Town and Parish Council Relationship Review. The newly formed Parish Forum had held its inaugural meeting and members had been apprised of the draft Action Plan, which sets out key objectives that have been identified as issues by the aforementioned Review, workshops and scrutiny panels.

Members' approval was sought for progressing the priorities for rural communities, as identified within the draft Rural Plan; the emerging Corporate Plan and Health and Social Well Being Agenda also need to be taken into consideration. The draft Action Plan will form the basis for consultation, particularly with parish/town councils, and will be presented to the Rural Conference to be held on 2nd October.

The Assistant to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration queried the classification of "rural", particularly with regard to Retford, and this was explained by the Senior Manager Support Services. For the practicalities of the Action Plan, those areas without parish/town councils have been excluded, i.e. Retford and Worksop.

The Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods felt that the draft Action Plan was very ambitious, particularly in the current economic climate. The Rural Ambassador advised that, although the District Council cannot provide many of the services, it can act as a facilitator for partners and agencies.

Options, Risks and Reasons for Recommendations

Cabinet can accept, amend or reject the proposals contained within the report. Given the priority placed upon this work by the Corporate Plan 2012-13, Cabinet is recommended to agree the proposals.

RESOLVED that approval be given to undertake consultation on the draft Rural Action Plan with final proposals to be presented to a future Cabinet Meeting.

54. REPORT(S) OF THE CABINET MEMBER – CUSTOMER AND SUPPORT SERVICES – COUNCILLOR S MAY

(a) Review of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme (Key Decision No. 388)

Members were provided with the latest information for consideration prior to agreeing the 2014/15 Bassetlaw District Council Tax Reduction (CTR) Scheme in the next few months. The scheme for 2013/14 was set by Council on 29th January 2013 taking effect from 1st April 2013 and was set for one year only.

Updates on progress after four months of the current arrangements were given, together with issues which must be considered for the 2014/15 scheme, including: the loss of the transitional subsidy; empty property changes; tax base growth; take up claims; exemption classes; non collection/non-payment; and pensioner calculation components.

It was noted that there have been approximately 500 households where liability orders have been obtained through the courts for payment of Council Tax; and also that the number of empty properties on the Council Tax Register has reduced by approximately 100, although there have been numerous complaints about the charge for empty homes.

Options, Risks and Reasons for Recommendations

The report highlights that, to run a CTR scheme in 2014/15, the financial forecasting predicts a shortfall in the region of £0.25m due to withdrawal of the Department for Communities and Local Government's transitional subsidy. There is an option to address this, by charging a minimum contribution next year of 12%.

The report also gives other options, including matters relating to empty property discounts or making savings from elsewhere or using reserves.

The Leader announced that this was the last Cabinet Meeting to be attended by Mr A Burton, Head of Revenues and Customer Services, as he was leaving the Authority at the end of September 2013. He thanked Mr Burton for his excellent work during his 22 years' service with the Authority; this was reiterated by the Cabinet Member for Customer and Support Services, who also thanked Mr Burton for his patience and personal support during her formative years.

RESOLVED that:

1. Progress on the Council Tax Reduction (CTR) Scheme be noted, together with the issues raised.
2. The Cabinet Member for Customer and Support Services, in conjunction with the Director of Resources, undertakes a review of matters that may shape the setting of the 2014/15 scheme in addition to the issue set out in (3) below.
3. Agreement be given for consultation on the proposed 12% minimum Council Tax contribution from working age claimants which may be necessary in 2014/15, and also other aspects of the existing scheme.
4. A final report be presented to Cabinet in December 2013 for full Council approval, which will take into account all relevant information.
5. Thanks be recorded to Mr A Burton, Head of Revenues and Customer Services, for his excellent work during his 22 years' service with Bassetlaw District Council, and best wishes for the future.

55. REPORT(S) OF THE CABINET MEMBER – FINANCE – COUNCILLOR J EVANS

(a) Budget Monitoring and Capital Programme Update Report to 30th June 2013 (Key Decision No. 387)

Members were updated on: the spending position for the period 1st April to 30th June 2013 for the Council's General Fund, Housing Revenue and Capital Programme, and updated on any significant variances from the approved budgets; the proposed resourcing of the Capital Programme and the level of Council capital resources available, including capital receipts; Treasury Management budget issues; and the regular quarterly update on performance against the approved Treasury Management Prudential Indicators for the period ending 30th June 2013.

The Cabinet Member for Finance explained that report now uses a 'traffic light' system and highlights areas of concern, e.g. fees and charges, Service budgets, HRA overspend, and Capital Programme expenditure. It was noted that there has been one further dividend from an Iceland bank.

Members' approval was sought for new additions, variations and re-profiling to the existing Capital Programme.

Options, Risks and Reasons for Recommendations

The budget monitoring section of the report provides managers' forecasts and is for information only. There are always some risks that the actual outturn variance could be substantially different from that currently shown, mainly due to the volatility of income, but the report sets out officers' projections and, as such, the financial risk that may occur by 31st March 2014.

The Council has responsibility for delivering its Capital Programme on time and not doing so could undermine the achievement of its objectives. The Regeneration and Property Group will continue to monitor future programmes on a monthly basis.

There may be changes to the way the Capital Programme is financed as officers review the most appropriate methodology as part of the closedown process for 2013/14.

RESOLVED that:

1. The position with regard to revenue and capital budget monitoring be noted.
2. The 'new approvals' to the 2013/14 Capital Programme totalling £1.462m, as detailed in Appendix 3 of the report, be approved.
3. The 'other variations' to the 2013/14 Capital Programme totalling (£0.262m), as detailed in Appendix 3 of the report, be approved.
4. The 're-profiling' to the 2013/14 Capital Programme totalling (£0.500m), as detailed in Appendix 3 of the report, be approved.
5. The proposed resourcing of the Capital Programme and the level of capital receipts currently available to fund any further capital expenditure be noted.
6. The quarterly update on performance against the approved Treasury Management Prudential Indicators for the period ending 31st March 2014, as detailed in Appendix 6 of the report, be approved.
7. The weekly investment balances made throughout the first quarter of the financial year be noted, in conjunction with the Security, Liquidity and Yield benchmarking data for the Council, as detailed in Appendix 7 of the report.
8. Further budget monitoring reports be printed in colour to show the 'traffic light' system.

56. REPORT(S) OF THE CABINET MEMBER – HOUSING – COUNCILLOR
A CHAMBERS

(a) Management of Properties owned by Registered Providers (Key Decision No. 428)

Members' approval was sought for A1 Housing (Bassetlaw) Ltd to manage properties on behalf of housing associations and other registered providers.

Options, Risks and Reasons for Recommendations

Members may elect to support or reject the proposal for A1 Housing to offer management services on six general needs dwellings to the Metropolitan Housing Association.

Members may elect to support or reject the proposal for A1 Housing to manage properties on behalf of housing associations and other registered providers where deemed appropriate and agreed by officers.

RESOLVED that:

1. A1 Housing (Bassetlaw) Ltd be authorised to offer management services on six general needs dwellings to the Metropolitan Housing Association.
2. A1 Housing be authorised to manage properties on behalf of housing associations and other registered providers where deemed appropriate and agreed by officers.

57. REPORT(S) OF THE CABINET MEMBER – REGENERATION – COUNCILLOR
J WHITE

(a) Bassetlaw's Local Development Framework: Site Allocations Development Plan -
Document Preferred Options Consultation (Key Decision No. 363)

Members were updated on the progress of Bassetlaw's Local Development Framework Site Allocations Plan. Since May 2013, discussions have been taking place with the new Cabinet Member for Regeneration, and a number of alternative proposals have been identified for consideration by officers. It is now necessary for officers to liaise again with the infrastructure providers, notably County Highways and Education, as well as such bodies as the Environment Agency and others, to achieve an understanding of the infrastructure implications of the alternative proposals. Once this work has been completed, relevant Members will be briefed on the findings and further studies may need to be commissioned.

Options, Risks and Reasons for Recommendations

There are no options as the report is for noting only.

RESOLVED that the progress of the Site Allocations Preferred Options document be noted.

(b) Bassetlaw Enterprise Grant Scheme (Key Decision No. 430)

Members' approval was sought on the process and implementation of a revised form of the Bassetlaw Enterprise Grant Scheme, following the abolition of the Enterprise Board in March 2013. The report proposed a new scheme of decision-making and a revision of the way in which applicants can benefit more from the scheme. A proposed protocol for the scheme was appended to the report, together with a proposed Service Level Agreement with the 2 Shires Credit Union.

Options, Risks and Reasons for Recommendations

Option One – To reverse the full Council decision and re-instate the Enterprise Board process.

Option Two – To allow a single assessment by the Cabinet Member for Regeneration to make a sole decision on the grant award.

Option Three – To establish a small panel of two elected Members, one being the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, plus one private sector member to assess the applications.

A further option is to allow the grant to be provided as a personal loan to assist the applicant in financing their new business with the loan being paid off by the grant award, providing the applicant produces evidence that they have spent their grant on agreed items.

Options for this are:

Option One – To do nothing and allow the grant award to operate as before.

Option Two – To operate the loan scheme directly via the Council's Finance Department. However, it is apparent within CIPFA regulations that writing off of loans and repayments are extremely cumbersome for a local authority to implement a small business loan scheme.

Option Three – To use a third party provider to draw up the loan agreements and, if necessary, administer the loan repayments. A mini competitive process was undertaken to provide this service and the 2 Shires Credit Union chosen in terms of being the most cost-effective provider.

RESOLVED that:

1. The establishment of a three-person panel be approved to support the decision-making process to award grants as a replacement for the former Enterprise Board arrangements. The panel to comprise the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, one other elected Member and one private sector member from a financial background.
2. The revised start-up loan provision be approved to deliver the Enterprise Grant Scheme working with the 2 Shires Credit Union as delivery partners.

Other Decisions

None.

SECTION B – ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION IN PRIVATE

Key Decisions

None.

Other Decisions

None.

58. ANY OTHER BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS TO BE URGENT

As there was no other urgent business to be considered, the Chairman closed the meeting.

(Meeting closed at 7.25 pm.)